

BRITISH IMMIGRATION INTO CANADA

1850 - 1873

A Thesis

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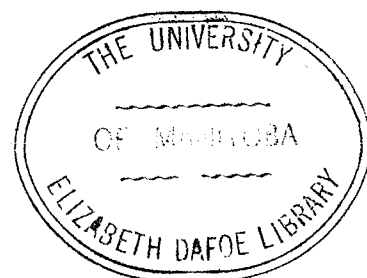
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Abstract

This study was originally planned on an ambitious scale. It was intended to study the factors that influenced British immigration into Canada in the period 1850-1914. Unfortunately, owing to considerations of time and space, it had become necessary to confine the study to the first of three secular economic periods into which the period 1850-1914 could be conveniently divided. It is hoped at some future date to extend the study to 1914.

The British formed the most important stream of immigrants into Canada in the period 1850-73. A variety of factors both economic and non-economic had influenced the British immigrants in choosing Canada as their future home. Though economic factors were the more important ones that determined the destination of the British emigrants, non-economic factors such as the policies and propaganda measures adopted by governmental and non-governmental bodies of the various countries that courted these emigrants, had a substantial part to play too. Besides examining the circumstances relevant to Great Britain and Canada that influenced British immigration into Canada, references are also made to the factors that determined British emigration to the United States and Australasia. Most of the British emigrants

during this period went to the United States. Australasia was the second most preferred destination. Canada was a poor third in their preference. It will be shown in this study that this order of preference exercised by the British emigrants was not entirely determined by economic factors. If Canada had followed as energetic an immigration policy as that followed by the United States or some of the Australasian colonies, she could have attracted more British and other immigrant settlers than had actually gone to Canada. Canada's absorptive capacity for immigrants during this period seemed to have been greater than the number of immigrants who had settled within her borders. This period also witnessed a large emigration from Canada. This phenomenon led some scholars to the conclusion that immigration was responsible for emigration. The fallacy of this argument will be pointed out in this study. What an energetic immigration policy and propaganda machinery could do by way of attracting immigrants was shown by the effects of the changes that were made in these fields after Confederation. It will be shown that the closing of the gap that existed between Canada and the other countries where policy and propaganda matters were concerned, had contributed to the increase in British immigration into Canada after 1867.

A few introductory words may be said about the arrangement and contents of the Chapters that follow. In Chapter I, British immigration is considered in relation to European and American immigration. The difficulties presented by inadequate and inaccurate statistical data in determining the relative importance

of the different immigrant streams into Canada are dealt with. Certain flaws in official statistics are noted. Flaws in statistical data had arisen largely as a result of Canada's geographical contiguity with the United States, which made it difficult to distinguish between the transient immigrants and immigrant settlers into Canada. Official estimates of emigration from Canada also suffered for the same reason. Suggestions have been made to construct estimates of various immigrant streams from census data. Finally, reference is made to the settlement of immigrants within Canada. In Chapter II, the British economy of the period 1850-73 is studied with special reference to those factors that induced emigration. Chapter III is concerned with the Canadian economy of the same period. The economy of the different provinces is studied in detail in order to give an idea of the number and types of immigrants Canada was capable of absorbing. In Chapter IV, it is shown that the contemporary American economy was at a higher stage of development, and it was this factor which proved to be the most important one in not only inducing most of the British emigrants to go there, but also in inducing a large emigration from Canada. The next three Chapters are concerned with the policies and propaganda measures of the various governmental and non-governmental institutions and individuals who were directly or indirectly concerned with British emigration. In the final Chapter, immigration into Canada is considered in relation to its absorptive capacity and it is held that the displacement theory of immigration is not applicable to our

period. This Chapter also spells out the results of the study. Some problems concerned with British immigration into Canada have been left untouched or incompletely analyzed, owing both to scanty material available as well as the desire to keep this study within reasonable limits.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT 1850 - 1873	1
II. BRITISH ECONOMY AND EMIGRATION	46
III. THE CANADIAN ECONOMY AND IMMIGRATION	81
IV. THE AMERICAN ECONOMIC VORTEX	125
V. BRITISH EMIGRATION POLICY	146
VI. CANADIAN IMMIGRATION POLICY AND PROPAGANDA ...	158
VII. IMMIGRATION AND THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS	217
VIII. ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY AND IMMIGRATION - CONCLUSION	240
BIBLIOGRAPHY	256

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
I. Population of Canadian Provinces, 1851-1871 ..	8
II. Population of Canada and the Percentage Increase by Decades, 1851-71	7
III. Numbers of Immigrant Settlers in Canada, 1852 - 1873	17
IV. Immigrant Arrivals and Distribution	19
V. Immigration (Cabin and Other Passengers) Through the Ports of Quebec and Montreal by Country of Origin, 1850-73	22
VI. European Immigrant Arrivals at Quebec by Nationality	23
VII. British Immigrant Arrivals in British North America	25
VIII. Outward Movement from England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland to British North America, 1850-73	26
IX. Quinquennial Totals of Immigration into Canada from Europe, the British Isles and the United States, 1851-1875 (thousands of persons) ...	32
X. Birth Place of the Foreign Born Population, Ontario and Quebec, 1851-1871	34
XI. Net Increase of the Foreign Born Population of Ontario and Quebec by Decades, 1851-1871 ...	36

TABLE	PAGE
XII. Estimated Net Settlement, Allowing for Deaths, of the Foreign Born Immigrant in Ontario and Quebec, 1851-1871	37
XIII. Immigrant Arrivals, Estimated and Net Settlement of Foreign Born and Emigration, Ontario and Quebec, 1851-1871	40
XIV. Total Arrivals, Immigrant Settlement, Through Passengers, Emigration and Net Settlement of Foreign Born	41
XV. Arrival and Distribution of Immigrants - Canada - 1850-1873	43
XVI. Annual Turning Points, British Trade Cycles, 1848-1873	48
XVII. Annual Average Percentage Rate of Change	49
XVIII. Percentage Distribution of the Occupied Population of England	52
XIX. Wages, Prices and Unemployment, 1850-1873	59
XX. Comparison of British Emigrants with Amount of Population within the United Kingdom	60
XXI. Outward Movement from England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland to Australasia, 1850-1873 .	61
XXII. Outward Movement from England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland to the United States of America, 1850-1873	62
XXIII. Percentage Distribution of British Emigration to extra-European Countries, 1850-1873	64

TABLE	PAGE
XXIV. Natives of Ireland Who Have Emigrated via Irish Ports to non-European Destinations (All Mediterranean Ports Excepted)	66
XXV. Average Weekly Wages of Agricultural Labour.	71
XXVI. Course of Average Money Wages in Selected Trades in United Kingdom	75
XXVII. Index Numbers of Prices in Canada, United States and England, 1848-1868	87
XXVIII. Index Numbers of Prices in Canada, 1868-1873	90
XXIX. Agricultural Progress, Upper and Lower Canada, 1851-71	100
XXX. Summary of Industrial Progress, Ontario and Quebec, 1871	104
XXXI. Occupations by Percentage Distribution, 1871	107
XXXII. Imports and Exports, 1868-1875	109
XXXIII. Imports and Exports, 1869-1875	110
XXXIV. Occupational Structure of Adult Male Steerage Passengers Landed at Quebec, 1850-1873	119
XXXV. Average Monthly Wages Excluding Board in Eastern and Western Canada, 1860	121
XXXVI. Rank of Leading Industries and Value of Products, 1860	138
XXXVII. Manufacturing by Sections, 1860	139
XXXVIII. Remittances by Settlers in North America to Their Friends in the United Kingdom	237

CHAPTER I

Migration and Settlement, 1850 - 1873

In 1850, Canada, as we recognize it today, did not exist either politically or economically. It consisted for the most part of a group of disjointed settlements known as the British North American Colonies. However, some measure of integration had already been achieved in the form of the union of Upper and Lower Canada in 1841. The next political milestone was the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867. The original partners of this political fusion were the united province of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The factors that led to the creation of the Dominion of Canada may be briefly enumerated as follows: (a) the refusal on the part of the United States to continue with the reciprocal trade arrangements which had been in force from 1854 to 1866; (b) the desire on the part of agriculturists, traders and industrialists in the United Province of Canada and the Maritimes to serve a bigger market which would be created as a result of Confederation; (c) the inconvenience of the railway debts that had fallen on the shoulders of these separate entities; (d) and perhaps to some extent fears engendered by the American Civil War which led some to believe that the United States, once having settled her internal problem might try to annex her northern neighbours.

In 1869, the Hudson Bay Company surrendered its jurisdiction over the lands it held in the Prairies and the Northwest to the Confederation, and in the following year, the Northwest Territory was added to the Confederation. In 1870, 1871 and 1873 respectively, the provinces of Manitoba, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island were added to the Confederation.

What had been the nature of settlement of the British North American Colonies up to 1850? When Great Britain acquired French Canada in 1763 by the Treaty of Paris, there were not more than about seventy thousand Frenchmen living in that Colony.¹ Then there followed an inflow of traders, settlers and military personnel from New England and Great Britain, and their number was immensely swelled by the immigration of the United Empire Loyalists during the American War of Independence. Settlement of military personnel had been facilitated by land grants made at the end of the Seven Years' War. The size of these grants depended on the ranks of the military personnel and varied from five thousand acres to Field Officers to fifty acres for Privates.² About thirty-five thousand to forty thousand United Empire Loyalists sought refuge in Canada and Nova Scotia. Before their arrival there were about twelve thousand people of British origin in Nova Scotia, about ten thousand in

¹According to the census of 1765, the population of Canada was 69,810. The Census of Canada 1870-71. vol.IV. (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, Rideau Street, 1873) Introduction xxxvi

²Norman MacDonald, Canada 1763-1841. Immigration and Settlement (London: Longmans, Green & Co. 1939) p.42

Quebec and none in the present province of Ontario. The United Empire Loyalists were given lands in Quebec and Nova Scotia to the extent of from two hundred to one thousand two hundred acres to each family, besides agricultural implements, food and clothing for two years. In addition, by an Act passed in 1789, the children of the Loyalists were to be given two hundred acres each when they came of age.³

At first, a greater part of the United Empire Loyalists moved into the Maritime provinces. But after 1783, the influx into the Maritimes was negligible. During this period, there had been little migration into Prince Edward Island. Since 1783, the Loyalists moved westward in greater numbers. There were seven thousand refugees in Quebec between 1783 and 1784.⁴ In 1791, Quebec was carved into the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. At this time, there were about one hundred thousand French and ten thousand English in Lower Canada, and about twenty thousand English and a few French in Upper Canada.⁵ By 1795, the population of Upper Canada had swelled to about thirty thousand people. From this time onward, till 1850, the Canadian population kept increasing at the rate at which the United States population increased. Most of the settlement was confined to the southern areas of the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. In Nova Scotia,

³The Census of Canada, 1870-71. op. cit., p. xl

⁴Nathaniel, Constantine. Allyn, "European Immigration into Canada 1946 - 1951" (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Stanford University, 1953) p.38

⁵Ibid.

Upper and Lower Canadas, colonization by means of land grants to leaders of colonization projects was attempted. But this kind of land grant gave rise to speculation and millions of acres fell into the hands of land speculators. Settlement in this manner was slow. Besides the leaders of colonization projects and military personnel, gratuitous grants were also made to civil servants, political favourites, capitalists and the Clergy. Two outstanding settlements that resulted from these grants were the Talbot and the Selkirk settlements. Unlike the Talbot settlement, the Selkirk settlement had to face various obstacles. Situated in the Red River Valley and entangled in the politics of rival fur trading companies whose interests were opposed to settlement, the Selkirk settlers found themselves in an unenviable position. Hence this settlement could not fill the role of a magnet that would attract other immigrants.

The practice of making extensive reserves for purposes of religion and compensation for government officials, resulted in what came to be known as the Crown and Clergy Reserves. These reserves had their origin in the instructions of the Secretary of State to the Colonial authorities in 1791, to set apart two-sevenths of the land granted to others as crown and clergy reserves. By 1821, four million acres had been reserved in Upper Canada and about two million acres in Lower Canada, scattered in two hundred lots.⁶ In 1801, these reserves were leased to tenants on a twenty-one years' tenure. But the lease system

⁶MacDonald, op. cit., p.227

failed to provide the anticipated revenue. Therefore, it was decided that the Crown Reserves should be sold and that the control and management of the Clergy Reserves be transferred from the provincial executives to that of the Corporation of the Clergy of the Church of England. The subsequent history of the Crown Reserves became merged in that of the land companies of Upper and Lower Canada. In the Maritimes, Crown and Clergy Reserves were of a modest proportion that did not create any undesirable effects.

The War of 1812-1815 brought a lull in immigration. From the time of the cessation of hostilities until the mid-nineteenth century, there was a tremendous increase of population in Upper Canada. "In Upper Canada, during the thirty-seven years, 1814-1851, the population increased at such a rate as to double itself every twelve years. This was an experience . . . which has not been equalled in Canada since, even in our western provinces."⁷ An extensive immigration was responsible for part of this growth. It is difficult to determine the exact number of net immigrants due to unreliable statistics on both immigration and emigration, especially the latter. Lower⁸ makes a rough estimate of the net annual immigrants at from fifteen to twenty thousand. Lower Canada did not experience anything like the rate of population increase that took place in Upper Canada.

⁷A.R.M. Lower, "The Case Against Immigration", Queen's Quarterly, xxxvii (Kingston: Queen's University, Summer 1930) pp. 558-59

⁸Ibid.

From the time of the British Conquest until 1851, her population doubled between twenty-five and twenty-six years.⁹ In the first half of the nineteenth century, there was a tremendous influx of British settlers, especially Scots and Irish, who formed about one-half of the total number.¹⁰ In fact, during a greater part of the period 1815 to 1850, British emigration to the British North American Colonies was more important than that to the United States. "Up to 1835, the emigration to British North America generally exceeded that to the United States. Between 1835 and 1847, emigration to the United States exceeded every year that to British North America; but the disproportion was not very great, never except in 1838 and 1839, amounting to two to one; but in the four years between 1848 and the close of 1851, the disproportion has been excessive . . ."¹¹ According to the census returns of 1851-52¹², the British North American colonies had a population of about two-and-one-half million, distributed as follows: Upper Canada - 952,004; Lower Canada - 890,261; New Brunswick - 193,800; Nova Scotia - 276,854; and Newfoundland - 101,600 (estimated). In 1855, the population of Prince Edward Island was estimated at 71,490, and in 1856, Assiniboia had a population of 6,691.¹³ The growth of this

⁹Ibid., p. 559

¹⁰Allyn, op. cit., p. 39

¹¹House of Commons Papers, [1499], xviii. 161. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1853) "Twelfth General Report of the Colonial Land and Emigration Commissioners", 1852. p.13

¹²The Census of Canada, 1870-71, op.cit.

¹³Ibid.

population in the decades of the fifties and sixties is shown in Table I., page 8.

The total population of Canada, excluding Newfoundland, for the period 1851-71, and the percentage increase by decades is shown in Table II.

TABLE II
POPULATION OF CANADA AND THE PERCENTAGE
INCREASE BY DECADES 1851-71

Year	Number	Percentage increase
1851	2,445,109	-
1861	3,229,633	32
1871	3,689,257	14.2

Table II shows the discrepancy in the rate of population growth in the decades of the fifties and sixties. The rate of growth of the population in the fifties was more than twice that of the sixties. However, reliance should not be placed on the absolute accuracy of these figures. They should be regarded as indicating a trend, rather than as portraying the absolute truth. As references to the Census statistics will be made frequently, this may be an opportune moment to point out some of the shortcomings of these statistics. In the first place, as has been pointed out elsewhere, the population of Canada in 1851 and 1861 was underestimated. In the second place, there were shortcomings arising from the defects concerned with the machinery set up to prepare the Census, mainly clerical. This

TABLE I^{*}

POPULATION OF CANADIAN PROVINCES, 1851 - 1871

	1851	1861	1871
Ontario	952,004	1,396,091	1,620,851
Quebec	890,261	1,111,566	1,191,516
New Brunswick	193,800	252,047	285,594
Nova Scotia	276,854	330,857	387,800
Prince Edward Island	71,490	80,857	94,021
British Columbia	55,000	51,524	36,247
Manitoba	-	-	25,228
Northwest Territories	5,700	6,691	48,000
Newfoundland	101,600	122,638	161,374

* The Seventh Census of Canada, 1931. Vol.I. (Ottawa, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1936) pp. 150-57, 348-50. The population figures for British Columbia include an estimated Indian population of 55,000, 37,900 and 29,375 respectively for the years 1851, 1861 and 1871. The population figure for the Northwest Territories in 1861 consists of the Census returns of Assiniboia in 1856. R.H. Coats, the Dominion Statistician in charge of the preparation of the Seventh Census, points out the inadequacy of the population estimates made for Manitoba, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories in 1851 and 1861. He is of the opinion that these areas probably contained 100,000 more persons including Indians. Cf. Seventh Census of Canada, Vol.I. op. cit., p. 350. The population figure of Newfoundland for the year 1851 has been estimated. The other two figures are from the Censuses of 1854 and 1874.